

## Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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US MISSION GENEVA 1457

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12902

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, IN

SUBJECT: THREE INDIAN AFFILIATES THREATEN TO DISAFFILIATE FROM  
THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION

1. AN AUGUST 13 CIRCULAR LETTER FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS' FEDERATION (ITF), C.H. BLYTH, ATTACKED "THE SEIZURE BY MRS. GANDHI OF DICTATORIAL POWERS" AND PROTESTED THE IMPOUNDING OF THE PASSPORT OF MOHAMMAD HODA, SECRETARY OF THE CIVIL AVIATION SECTION OF THE ITF, BY THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON. EXCEPT FOR THE ALL INDIA RAILWAYMEN'S FEDERATION OF WHICH GEORGE FERNANDES WAS UNTIL RECENTLY THE PRESIDENT, ALL THE OTHER MAJOR INDIAN AFFILIATES OF THE ITF HAVE STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE BLYTH LETTER.

2. REPLYING TO BLYTH, THE PRINCIPAL LEADER OF THE INTUC'S CALCUTTA SEAMEN'S UNION, BIKAS MAJUMDER, STATED THAT THE ITF GENERAL SECRETARY WAS GUILTY OF HAVING "A DEEP SEATED PREJUDICE AGAINST INDIA." MAJUMDER CONTINUED: "IT DOES NOT SURPRISE US FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THE SO-CALLED FREE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR MOVEMENT HAS UNTIL NOW BEEN  
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DOMINATED BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE AFFLUENT WORKERS

IN THE WEST AND IN THE RECENT PAST THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS EVIDENCES AND INSTANCES WHERE THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT HAVE SO ACTED AS TO PROTECT THE AFFLUENCE OF THEIR WESTERN CLIENTELE TO THE UTTER DISREGARD OF THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS OF THE THIRD WORLD." HE DENIED THAT THE INDIAN TADE UNION MOVEMENT HAD BEEN "SUBJECTED TO REPRESSION," AND IN CLOSING MAJUMDER THREATENED TO DIS-AFFILIATE THE SEAMEN'S UNION FROM THE ITF.

3. THE INDEPENDENT BOMBAY UNION OF SEAFARERS HEADED BY LEO BARNES ALSO THREATENED TO WITHDRAW HIS ORGANIZATION FROM THE ITF, IF THE AUGUST 13 LETTER WAS NOT RETRACTED. AND FINALLY, THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYMEN (INTUC) ALSO WARNED THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO RECONSIDER ITS AFFILIATION TO THE ITF IF "ITS DELIBERATE, FALSE AND SLANDEROUS PROPAGANDA AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER" CONTINUED.

4. THE ALL INDIA PORT AND DOCK WORKERS FEDERATION (INDEPENDENT, BUT GROUPING PRO-CONGRESS PARTY AFFILIATED UNIONS OF THE INTUC AND THE HMS) STOPPED SHORT OF THREATENING TO DISAFFILIATE BUT CALLED FOR AN APOLOGY TO MRS. GANDHI AND FOR THE SUSPENSION OF BLYTH PENDING AN INQUIRY INTO HIS CONDUCT.

5. COMMENT: MOST OF THE ABOVE WAS CARRIED IN THE INDIAN PRESS. MAJUMDER TOLD US THAT HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO HAVE THE INDIAN AFFILIATES OF THE ITF RESPOND PRIVATELY TO BLYTH, BUT THAT HIS HAND WAS FORCED WHEN THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS CALLED IN THE PRESS. MAJUMDER PRIVATELY ACKNOWLEDGES THE DECLINE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN INDIA DURING THE EMERGENCY BUT ARGUES THAT HS UNION AND THE OTHER INDIAN AFFILIATES OF THE ITF HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO REACT AS THEY DID TO THE BLYTH LETTER. IT'S A SIMPLE MATTER OF SURVIVAL. LEO BARNES, WHO IS TRYING TO PRESERVE THE ABILITY OF HIS UNION TO REPRESENT THE "BREAD AND BUTTER" INTERESTS OF ITS MEMBERS, OFFERED A SIMILAR EXPLANATION FOR HIS PROTEST. BARNES TOLD CONGEN BOMBAY THAT HE HAS NO INTENTION OF PURSUING THE MATTER OF THE BLYTH LETTER FURTHER UNLESS THE ITF DOES. FOR BARNES, A RECENT RECRUIT TO THE CONGRESS PARTY, HIS STATEMENT WAS REQUIRED TO PROVE HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICAL BONA FIDES. FOR THE LEADERS OF THE ALL INDIA PORT AND DOCK WORKERS FEDERATION AND THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYMEN, THEIR DENUNCIATION OF THE ITF CIRCULAR WAS PRESUMABLY LESS PAINFUL. INDIAN AFFILIATES OF THE ITF, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN RAILWAYMEN, DO NOT APPEAR INTENT ON CARRYING OUT THEIR THREATS TO DISAFFILIATE. THEY PRESUMABLY HOPE THAT THEIR DENUNCIATIONS OF THE BLYTH

LETTER WILL SUFFICE TO APPEASE THE GOI.  
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## Message Attributes

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